state of love and trust by buckyjbarnnes

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Summary:

“I want to get rid of it because it’s mine,” Billy says eventually, still looking at the sink. “This probably doesn’t make any fucking sense, but we ran away in the middle of the night a month ago, and that was the first time I felt like I had control, and now that I know what that is and can do what I want because it’s my life, I want to get rid of it.”

alternatively: Billy wants to cut his hair, but he can't bring himself to do it because of reasons.

state of love and trust

Author's Note:

> Someone wrote something similar to this a while ago and it was very cute. I just wrote this because I can't get rid of my own damn hair.
> Title's from Pearl Jam's "State of Love and Trust"

He's pissed off.

He isn’t as often these days, but this time he's pissed because he's frustrated. And he's frustrated at *himself* , which isn't new either, but when he gets frustrated at himself, it usually has a more relevant reason than not being able to cut his hair, although the really wants to. He just *can't* do it.

And it's partly because he's attached, because he's seen himself with long hair in the mirror his *whole* life, because if anyone said Billy in their mind, apart from *dickhead* , they'd associate the name with *long hair,* probably. Because when he was a kid, he used to get shit from other kids and from his own father, but he loved his hair, so he just held his head high and sometimes closed his hands in fists and punched whoever tried to be smart about it. And also because his mom had the same golden locks of hair that he has, and when he looks at them in the mirror, it reminds him of her, and of how much she loved his hair; of how she'd braid it and comb it softly, - when Neil wasn't around, obviously - of how she'd wash it with the good, expensive stuff. Of how she'd card it with her delicate fingers when Billy cried. So his hair feels like one of the few things that bring him bittersweet memories from his past.

It's also partly because it's his safety blanket. Because he compensates his insecurities by taking care of his hair. He doesn’t have a problem

with how he looks, like, his face and his body, but he still has insecurities. He's insecure about his height, for instance, and the fact that he's queer, and that all in all, he's just some kid from the wrong side of the tracks. So he compensates by lifting weights, flirting with chicks and driving a cool car, and always looking great. And taking care of his hair, because he thinks his hair is what really seals the deal, what *completes* him.

So Billy is attached, and he compensates his issues with his hair, but those are not the only reasons why he can't bring himself to do it. Sometimes, it's like 1 in the morning and he's lying awake in bed and thinks *'I'm cutting it right now'* and when he has already wet his hair and divided it in sections, holding the scissors in his hand, he wusses out and just goes back to bed. The thing is, he mainly wusses out because he can't figure out how to do it without fucking it up. He's a perfectionist, and he cares *a lot* about how he looks, and sure, it's just *hair* and it *grows back,* but he can't afford to walk around with an uneven haircut or with holes in his hair until it grows back. It'd be crushing. Steve would laugh at him (he wouldn't but *still*). And yeah, there's also Steve. Steve sometimes tells him he has a bird's nest instead of a mullet, or that mullets are tacky and that he looks like a trailer park king, but Billy *knows* he likes his hair because once when they were drunk, Steve a lot more than Billy, he told him that his hair makes him look *angelic*. Steve is his best buddy, and although they give each other a lot of shit, Steve always lets him know one way or another that he looks great when he puts more effort in styling his hair, whether it is with a dumb jab that only sounds like an insult, or with genuine admiration. And Billy fucking *lives* for the attention, because Steve is one of the, like, 3 people Billy has ever loved. But that same thing also stops him, because what if Steve thinks he looks *gross* without his hair and just leaves him? And that's a fucking stupid thought, because he *knows* Steve would never do that, because for whatever reason, Steve genuinely *likes* Billy for who he is. Steve stuck around even when Billy was still a little shit, and Steve also *ran away* from Hawkins in the middle of the fucking night with Billy, so he's aware that it would take a whole lot more for Steve to leave than him getting a bad haircut.

So while he's shirtless, holding the scissors and with his hair divided in sections in front of the mirror, Steve walks in, asking about dinner.

“Hey, wanna go eat at that place in- what the *hell* are you doing?”

“What does it *look* like I'm doing?” Billy says flatly.

“Um,” Steve stands in the doorway, frowning, “Why are you doing that?”

“They say change is good,” Billy says looking at him in the mirror.

Steve doesn't seem convinced. “You don't like change,”

And yeah, that's true, he fucking *hates* change. “Mullets are tacky,” He says instead of answering to that. He knows he’s making dumb excuses.

Steve sees right through his bullshit though, rolls his eyes and crosses his arms over his chest. “You like that thing more than you like *me* , and I’m your best friend,”

“Shut up,” Billy says, because how *dare* he even think that for a second, “You hate it, though.”

“I don’t exactly *hate* it,” Steve shrugs. “And c’mon, I know you wouldn’t *ever* cut your hair just ‘cause *I* don’t like it. What’s going on?.”

“Right,” Billy says nodding slightly, looking at the sink. “I just. I don’t want it anymore.”

And he doesn’t know how to explain that he wants to cut it, because it’s *his* . Because he decided that cutting it, claiming his hair in a way, is the next step to start being in charge of his life and his decisions. He got the mullet because his father wanted him to get a fucking buzz cut when his mom died and there was no one to defend him anymore. It was his little act of rebellion, to have it not as long as before, but to keep it somehow at same time. But since Billy ran away and now was on his own, leading his own life, little acts of rebellion were unnecessary. He did whatever he wanted.

So the mullet wasn’t his statement anymore. He didn’t *need* it anymore.

Steve doesn’t ask for an explanation. Steve just… he understands. It’s kind of crazy how much Steve understands. And yeah, Billy’s getting better at communicating what he feels, since they live together and depend on each other to survive, but he still struggles sometimes and Steve *gets it* . He knows when Billy doesn’t know how to explain how he feels, and he just lets him be, lets him find the words if he wants to talk. Steve is the best fucking thing that ever happened to him.

“I want to get rid of it because it’s *mine* ,” Billy says eventually, still

looking at the sink. “This probably doesn’t make any fucking sense, but we ran away in the middle of the night a month ago, and that was the first time I felt like I had *control* , and now that I know what that is and can do what I want because it’s my life, I want to fucking get rid of it.”

“And like, I’m not stalling because I *don’t* want to do it. I’m stalling because I *can’t* figure out a way to do it and then feel like I’m gonna like it. And *it’s just hair* , goddamnit. And it’s stupid and fucking *embarrassing* that I’m afraid to get a haircut, like some pussy. And that’s why it’s taken me so fucking long. Like, I woulda done it the day we got here, but. Yeah.” Billy says frustrated, looking up at Steve in the mirror.

Steve waits for a bit, but then says with a soft expression, with his doe eyes all shiny, “It does make sense, and nothing you *ever* feel is stupid, you know, I understand what you mean,” and Billy about melts when he says that, because he feels validated and supported. Steve always *understands* , and Billy isn’t sure why he ever doubted he wouldn’t.

“Do you want me to help you with it?” He asks softly, still not moving from where he’s standing.

“Yeah,” Billy says gravelly after a while, swallowing, “I’d like that.”

Steve approaches him then, stands behind Billy, examining him in the mirror.

“You’d still look good even if you had like, bald spots, you know,”

Steve musters, to lighten up Billy's mood.

"Bullshit," Billy says smiling a little bit, "you're just saying that in case this goes south real fast,"

Steve snorts a little bit, "Nah, you know what I'm saying is true," his smile turning softer as he finishes the sentence.

Billy stares at Steve and… *something* happens. He never knows what Steve's tender looks mean. Sometimes it gives him the impression that Steve could somehow return Billy's feelings, but then again, maybe it's just platonic love that he's confusing for something else. Billy wouldn't know, because he never had someone like Steve in his life before.

Steve's smile doesn't falter, not even when Billy's no longer smiling back. He just gets closer, ruffles Billy's hair a bit, breaking the *something* , and then puts a little distance between them. "Alright, pass me the comb? and those hair bands. It's not sectioned evenly," Steve says examining his hair. Then when Billy passes him everything, he starts re-arranging the sections completely, and Billy thinks that if he went about cutting his hair the way he was going to do it, he would've fucked it up beyond repair and would've had to end up with the fucking buzz cut.

"Do you want it to be real short? or do you want to keep the long strands on top and just cut the length?" Steve asks, looking at Billy in the mirror.

"Cut the length but keep the curls on top, I wanna see how it looks

slicked back and shit.”

“Mhmm, good call.” Steve says smiling a little bit, still arranging Billy’s hair.

Billy hesitates for a moment. “Steve,” he says in a concerned tone, looking at how focused Steve is. “I really appreciate this, y’know, but... do you *know* what you’re doing?”

Steve’s lips curl up at that, amused, but he keeps doing what he’s doing without looking at Billy. “Sure I do,”

Billy’s not convinced, like, in the fucking *least* with that answer, so he *freaks out* . “You gotta tell me, Steve, I ain’t gonna be mad if you *don’t* know how to do this, y’know, but if you fuck it up I *will* lose my shit and - ”

Steve’s almost laughing when he cuts him off. “Billy, I *swear* I won’t fuck it up, okay? You’re *fine* . Trust me, yeah?”

Billy’s squinting at Steve when he says that, because honestly, Steve doesn’t seem like the type to know *jack shit* about cutting hair, but then again, Steve’s always full of surprises. And Billy trusts him, like, with his fucking *life* , so.

Then there’s also the fact that if the damage is already done, he can always go to a barber shop or whatever to get it fixed. It would feel somehow less traumatic if Steve fucks it up, because he’d maybe get a

bit mad about it, but he *loves* Steve, so he would get over it once he was happy with the outcome. He wouldn't forgive himself if *he* was the one who fucked it up, though.

Billy sits over the lid of the toilet stradling it backwards, when Steve is done sectioning and arranging everything. When he feels Steve grab one of the sections, he closes his eyes and breathes, trying not to bolt.

Steve sees how he tenses up. He puts the scissors down and places a hand on Billy's shoulder, squeezing, comforting. "Want me to count to 3 before I do it?"

Billy shakes his head. "No, if you do that, I'm gonna bitch out. Just. Do it, yeah?"

"Alright." Steve squeezes his shoulder again.

And then he hears how the scissors make a clicking sound, and… it doesn't feel wrong, or scary anymore. He feels excited, actually, like the night after Billy's 18th birthday when they fled Hawkins and left their pasts behind. He likes how some of his hair falls in his lap. It looks surreal.

Steve works silently, and Billy appreciates it. He's keyed up about it, too jittery to keep a conversation. He wants to see the end result and how it suits him.

He feels Steve's hands deftly cutting his hair, and before too long, Steve runs his hand through his new hair a little bit, squeezes his shoulder gently again, and says, "All done," cheerily.

Billy stands, not really thinking, and looks in the mirror above the sink. He just wants to know if it is a hot mess and get it over with. When he does look though...it looks fucking *fantastic* , in Billy's opinion. It's a layered thing, like those type of gangster slick backs, and it's *so* much better than the mullet, if he's being honest. But really, what he's most surprised about isn't even that. When he sat down over the toilet lid, he definitely didn't expect this level of good, but figures, because Steve's *truly* something else.

"Do you like it?" Steve says, smiling shyly.

"Are you kidding me, I fucking *love* it, *damn* ," Billy says hysterically, slicking his hair back while it's still wet.

Steve's smiling bright now, moving to pick up the mess of hair all over the floor and then exiting the bathroom to go find a broom, probably. Billy would help him, but he's unable to stop admiring how it looks, because he finally feels like who's staring back in the mirror is not some scared kid who has to put up a front everyday just to survive. He feels like *himself* is finally staring back; someone who's still figuring it out, but who's also in for achieving great things. And somehow, his short curls slicked back also kind of make his features stand out, and he thinks of his mom, thinks of how he has the same thick brows and full lips as her. He feels her memory more alive than ever, because maybe he finally looks like the man she always envisioned him to be.

He finally feels like he genuinely *likes* what he sees.

He also likes the fact that of all people, *Steve* gave this to him. And perhaps it is a little bit *dumb* , but it means the *world* to Billy because it feels like personal growth. And Steve helped him with it, like he always does.

Steve finishes putting things away, so he goes to stand next to Billy in the mirror, examining him. He has a soft expression as he looks at Billy, one that he only ever uses when they get high in the middle of the night and they both let their guard down. And it's fucking *cute.* Billy loves how Steve's doe eyes go all shiny, how his face relaxes and how it makes him look younger. When he gets like that, Billy wishes he could wrap his arms around him tightly, kiss him breathless and never let go.

He doesn't do any of that in that moment, though.

"Thank you, Steve," Billy says sincerely, quietly, not breaking eye contact.

Steve's eyes go *softer* , and Billy really has to use his willpower not to jump Steve. He's looking at him like *that* again, like he... *likes* Billy, or whatever.

"Really suits you,"

"It's different, I guess." Billy's definitely blushing when he says that.

Billy looks down. He feels awkward as *fuck* , his usual confidence suddenly no longer playing. Maybe it all resided in his hair and now that it's gone, he's kind of awkward like any other random dude his age. He doesn't know what to do or how to act. Steve's still looking at him, he can *feel* it, and Billy doesn't know how to break the moment, how to say some dumb shit like he usually does to use as distraction.

"Billy," Steve says in weird tone he hasn't used before.

Billy looks up, and before he has the chance to get all tensed up and ask what's wrong, Steve's getting closer and then he's brushing his lips gently against Billy's. At first, Billy doesn't really understand what's going on and is frozen, with his eyes wide open in shock and non responsive to Steve's warm lips pressing against his own. It almost feels *fake* , like he hit his head against the sink and is just dreaming the whole thing up while he's unconscious, but when Steve starts to pull away, he finally snaps out of it and surges forward with too much enthusiasm, because his teeth kind of collide with Steve's and it *hurts* , and it's *embarrassing* , so Steve hisses, but Billy stays firm in his resolution and kisses Steve back, parting his lips just a little bit.

Steve's lips are soft as they move gently against Billy's. His fingers slowly creep up until they are tangled in the shorter length of Billy's hair, and the touch makes him gasp in the kiss a little bit. He circles his arms tightly around Steve's waist after a moment, bringing him closer to him.

They are not even really using tongue in the kiss, and Billy feels like it's unlike both of them to share such an innocent kiss. He's used to rough kisses; fast, full of heat and biting and nibbling, and he knows Steve is too, but despite all that, he knows that this kiss in the bathroom of their shitty apartment is for sure the *best* kiss he's *ever*

had in his life.

Steve breaks the kiss after a while, and his eyes are glittering. He's blushing, looking a little bit taken aback. He looks absolutely *beautiful* in Billy's opinion. Billy knows they should like, *talk* about what just happened, because it's a little unclear where it leaves them, but it's hard to really think about that when they are still all up in each other's spaces, sharing the same air and Steve looking at him like he hung the moon. Billy's mind is absolutely haywire, he wants to say something but he doesn't know *what* .

Steve beats him to it, moving his hand and tugging a little bit at the longer strands at the top of Billy's head. The softness of his eyes roaming Billy's face is still there when he speaks.

"Thank you for trusting me with this,"

Billy knows he looks like a sap about to *cry* when Steve says that.

"Thank *you* . For everything. I mean it."

Steve smiles bright again, at Billy's choked up voice, and at the rare, sweet unexpected moment.

"You look *great,* you know,"

Steve looks at him, examining, almost in awe and Billy can't help but blush for a second time that night. And isn't that *something* , big bad

Billy Hargrove being sappy and blushing.

“Yeah?” He asks, sounding a bit breathless.

“ *Fuck yeah* ,” Steve says, smiling and looking a little bit more like his usual self, cupping Billy’s cheek with his hand, “you should like, let your beard grow? and then you should get a couple tattoos, you know, to complete the look,”

Billy chuckles lightly. “You’d be into that?”

“ *Very* into that,”

Billy kisses Steve again right after he says that. This time the kiss is different; more certain, more playful. It’s just as amazing as the first, though. Steve tugs a little bit at Billy’s hair, and he *loves* it. He loves Steve, his new life, and the fact that the last reminder of everything he hated is gone. Finally his inside matches his outside, and it’s liberating. He’s *definitely* no longer pissed off or frustrated.

Author's Note:

> English is not my first language, so I appreciate it if you leave some feedback!! Thanks for reading!